

Assignment TV

By **TERRENCE O'FLAHERTY**

In an effort to understand the reasoning behind NBC's sudden cancellation of the Richard Boone Show — TV's only major dramatic innovation in a decade — I recently telephoned Mort Werner, the net's vice president in charge of programming. He said: "After look at the 20 shows that had been completed to date we reached the conclusion that, although everybody had broken their backs over this show, it would not reach the kinds of creative goals that we had hoped for. We all tried our best but the cards were stacked against us at the material level. No one had written for a repertory company before and good dramatic scripts were an immediate problem."

"We met with Boone and his producer Buck Houghton and we were all concerned about the material because they were falling into such off-beat kinds of stories that any opportunity to have word-of-mouth or grow or be popular was limited . . ."

THE SERIES had some wonderful spots but some enormous low points. Some shows just don't work out. Of course every show can't be good in an anthology," said Werner.

What were some of the shows you liked?

"I'd — well, I don't want to go into that. "Also, stars did not emerge from this repertory company. I think that Bethel Leslie, who has done some wonderful performances, did not quite emerge — well, like everybody's talking about Bethel Leslie or whatever."

But in my understanding of the true repertory theater, Mr. Werner, there are no stars. "No, they ALL become stars."

But Miss Leslie only starred in three or four dramas. Is that enough to get everybody talking about her?

"Well . . . we had hoped this would be a real word-of-mouth type of show and I think it reached that point to a limited degree . . . The progress was very erratic."

ON THE SUBJECT of ratings — the traditional excuse given by most executives — Werner was cautious.

And with good reason because in the ratings recently released by Nielsen for Nov. 25 - Dec. 22, the Richard Boone Show topped "Petticoat Junction" and "The Greatest Show on Earth" in its first half hour and reached an even larger audience during its second half hour topping both "Greatest Show" and Jack Benny.

"Ratings are only an indication of trends," said Werner, "and trends weren't going up. I am told that the major sponsor, Reynolds Aluminum, was eager to continue."

"I don't think that is accurate. I don't say they wanted to continue or discontinue because I don't have much to do with the sponsor but I would think that if you checked, it may or may not be true."

IN OTHER WORDS, you would say it wasn't true?

"No. We have never gone to them about continuing. The decision to schedule it for one

There is dew in one flower and not in another, because one opens its cup and takes it in, while the other closes itself and the drops run off. —Henry Ward Beecher

Pipeline of Life



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Supposing you had gone first to Reynolds and they had said they want to renew for another season? Then what would NBC's position be?

"I am not in the sales department and I can't answer that."

A member of the cast told me that the sponsor was pleased with the show but the ad agency was the one to complain occasionally.

"I really stay away from that

area because if I get involved in what everybody thinks, then I don't know what to think."

"PLEASE DON'T have people write to me. It was an experiment that didn't work out but NBC will continue to experiment. Right now we're asking for trouble with 'That Was The Week That Was' and it's a nightmare but suppose it doesn't work — think of the letters we'll get . . ."

First Lutheran Church will continue its series of Lenten services each Wednesday evening at 7:30 for the duration of Lent. Each week, a different pastor will speak under the general theme of "Who Am I?"

Topics to be covered include: "A Spiritual Being?," "A Tool of the Devil," "A Lost Sinner?," "A Child of God?," and "A King?"

Guest pastors include The Rev. Wayne Thomson, First Lutheran Church of Inglewood; the Rev. Henry Erickson, Rolling Hills Ascension Lutheran Church; the Rev. David Bab-

First Lutheran Church Sets Series of Lenten Services

cock, Los Angeles Ascension Lutheran Church; the Rev. Eugene Gauerke, Inglewood Lutheran Church.

Commission Okays Zoning Variance

Regional Planning Commissioners have approved a zoning exception for Willard G. Hammett in Lomita. The exception will allow a store building extension into A-1 property located at Eshelman Avenue and Lomita Boulevard.

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